

*The
Background
Of
Solidarity*



An Invitation to Revolt...

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The term “solidarity” refers to a very broad concept that can be applied to different aspects of life and anarchist struggle (although the two should be the same, they are not always) and with diverse interpretations. To narrow the analysis a little, we will be discussing solidarity in the face of state repression within the kingdom of Spain. We will consider various meanings of the term and how they have been put into practice across this geographic and political context. One possible definition of solidarity is that which was used by members of the MIL (Iberian Liberation Movement) in the 1970s, a definition they borrowed from the anarchist illegalist, anti-organizing tradition. They understood it as the deepening and widening of the struggles of those who are repressed and thereby connected solidarity to conflictuality. For this group, when comrades were repressed, the work of those who wanted to show solidarity meant taking up the mantle of their struggle (independent of the methods but always through direct action, of course), stepping into the void left behind by their arrest and imprisonment, and continuing the struggle by attacking the enemy in similarly concrete ways. As the group used to say, “Society already provides us with social workers and priests. Revolutionaries must deal with other things.” Of course, the MIL can be considered an extreme case especially because of the scale of its activity and the sentences they received. However, the interesting thing about MIL’s approach is that it seeks to continue the fight against authority exactly where it was left off when repression hit. The objective of people doing solidarity work is then, to explain (when necessary), justify, and reproduce attack. Given this definition, which can be criticized, expanded, revised or reformulated, it should be asked what solidarity and in particular anarchist solidarity has meant and continues to mean in the Spanish kingdom.

We see in most contemporary cases in the Iberian Peninsula, that the ways of understanding solidarity differ significantly from the MIL approach. It is disheartening to see that in the majority of

instances, anarchist solidarity is reduced to trying to clear the names of the repressed (supposedly tarnished by the state in its efforts to halt their struggle) and the crucial logistical tasks of supporting detainees and prisoner's basic necessities, but little else.

Solidarity tends to be broken up into different chunks. People usually come out with a string of detail-laden explanations about the arrest, try to account for each person's particular case, which, often with an oral or written explanation of their personal experience, affirm publicly why the accusations are false, unfounded or exaggerated, not to mention the outcry about the inconsistency of the legal foundations that sustain them. On far fewer occasions they will explain why the state is trying to stop or repress this or that struggle, what things have been achieved, how they inconvenienced the system, how things were moving along before, and the need for this particular struggle to grow the maximum possible. Of course, the more "generic" and "political" the anti-systemic tendency in questions appears, or rather the grievances on which it is based, the more difficult it becomes to explain why it is repressed, what the authorities are using it to justify, and what exactly it is that they want to stop. This type of analysis is easier to make about localized, intermediate, or partial struggles (which, while not being the same, often coincide), when a specific action is repressed, like for example an attack on a fascist or a cop. Still, even if there were a specific action to repress, solidarity often (fortunately not always) tends to be restricted to clearing or sweetening the name of the accused, or defanging what they are accused of doing. There are certain types of expressions that are frequent when solidarity materializes, usually in the "campaign" format, that, in the best case scenario, try to "unite" different cases of repression to "visibilize" and therefore "strengthen" their defense, and instead of scrupulously discarding, often uncritically valorizing "alliances". Of course, when we get into the thorny terrain of "alliances" is when we have to start modifying the

content of what we want to transmit. The political justification of the plight of the detained must be altered so that it can fit into a vision that satisfies all parties.

This, “personalized” campaigns have become increasingly common, using slogans like “being antifascist / young / feminist / anarchist / syndicalist / anti-speciesist / communist / pro-independence / trans / unemployed / skater / graffiti artist / ad infinitum... is not a crime”. Or in other situations, “the state is the real terrorist” (along with its many variants). One can see in these examples a clear attempt, conscious or not, to appeal to the public opinion, or maybe to “everyday people”. They try to communicate that the detained or incarcerated individuals are not the demons the state has made them out to be, because being a criminal or terrorist is morally unacceptable and taking up these categories could “undermine support” for the campaign (not to mention the big legal problem they would put themselves in). There is a great fear of “criminalization”, a fetishized word that comes out in almost all the communiques and anti-repression campaigns that take place. On this, very familiar, point we must stop a moment to analyze the concept of solidarity that is being employed across these Iberian landscapes and convert their outline into a true reflection and not a mere tendentious, explanation. Focusing exclusively on the anarchist or anarchic milieu (albeit sometimes shared with communists), some reflections arise that we want to share in the form of questions. This format also emphasizes that we do not have answers to our own questions (at least not all), so the intention is not to lecture, but rather to move forward the debate. Many of the expressions of solidarity that are analyzed here in the form of critique have admittedly been brought up in the past, with or without tact, by the authors of this document.

Firstly, why is the word “criminalized” used so often? To criminalize means (according to the Royal Academy of Spain), “to

attribute a criminal character to someone or something”. Which brings us back to the question of crime, a word meaning “reprehensible action” (2nd meaning of the RAE), but also “serious offense”. Looping us back to the word “offense”, which in additions to meaning “reprehensible action” (here as in crime, it highlights the moralizing character of the term and equates legislation with ethics and morals) in its second definition, also means “breach of the law”. Therefore a crime is a serious offense, and a serious offense is a serious breach of the law. Following this reasoning, if as anarchists we want the destruction of the state, capitalism, and all forms of power, which is obviously illegal according to the government of Spain (and all parts of the world), we see that to try to destroy the state is definitionally a serious offense and therefore a crime.

So either we are criminals or we would like to someday be. Thus to attribute a criminal character to anarchism is painfully redundant.

Why, then, is it a problem that they criminalize us if we are actually criminals, or at least would like to be? If what we are doing is merely re-signifying the term, or referring to its moral connotation, we could at least say that openly. Anyway, are morals not fundamentally a way of propping up the established order and is this not the same order that then determines their valance? Should they not also be destroyed? Then what are we so concerned about?

Second, the slogan “[...] is not a crime” tends to be chronically and thoughtlessly reiterated. And if it were a crime, what would be the problem? Haven’t we agreed that we are delinquents and, moreover, criminals? In fact, when it comes to justifying a punishable act of which anarchists are accused, using these formulas leads us to fall into contradictions and falsehoods/ When they say “being anti-fascist is not a crime”, for example, certainly they are correct. But only if the activity in questions is being carried out within the law.

When the crime consists of, for example, beating up a nazi, it is said to be an “act of self defense”, especially when confronted in a legal process. This could be true, but what if it had not been a defensive act, but an attack of open hostility? Can the state really be destroyed from acts of self defense along? If self defense is motivated by the very existence of the threat of the state, is it not logical to think that we want its destruction and can only defend ourselves by attacking? Rather than affirming the fact that power must be destroyed, we often use legal language, even amongst ourselves, emphasizing what is a crime and what is not, as if it interested us even a little bit. We concede that it is logical to take into account what is actually a crime and what is not in order to know the potential consequences. But we must act according to what is useful or ethical from our own point of view, not from the perspective of the state. Often this type of campaign tends to complement demands for the acquittal of certain defendants. This is more of the same. Are we going to step into legal arguments to decide who is innocent and who is guilty, who committed crimes and who did not, who deserves punishment and penalty and who clemency or absolution? Let the judges take care of that. If we want to get into those arguments, we would be better off studying law and challenging the judge on the bench. At least then our decisions would have real effects and we would earn a juicy salary as the system’s lackeys.

Finally, too often we are prone to succumbing to the formula “the state is the terrorist”, when the anarchist world is suffering from an anti-terrorist operation. By doing this we are taking up the term terrorism, but applying it confusingly to the system itself. So we agree with the label “terrorist”, though it is legally, linguistically, culturally, and morally constructed by power, but we reject it for ourselves and apply it to them? Terrorism is a rod that has an enormous number of meanings depending on the period of history

of point in process of struggle against the state and/or capitalism that we find ourselves in. If terrorism means in one of the RAE's definitions (usually in the 1st or 2nd depending on the edition) "to dominate through terror", we will have to agree that we are not terrorists, but in the same way that we are not bosses, as we do not want domination to exist at all. But "terrorism" has four more meanings, without counting its definition in the penal code. Some of these meanings may have to do with our struggle and its effects, like for example "a succession of acts of violence carried out to instill terror in the population or part of it", which sounds like a more convoluted and developed version of the typical campaigns with slogans like "may fear change sides", etc. Other definitions allude to the "criminal activity of organized gangs that seek to create social alarm for political purposes". Regarding organization or no, the debate at the heart of anarchism is very wide and long-term. Social alarm is also too ambiguous a term that could coincide with some anarchist ideas. Not to mention that the term terrorist was reclaimed with pride many times by many anarchists in the past (in fact in the Spanish kingdom, on the anniversary of the death of Durruti, Garcia Oliver called the anarchist group Los Solidarios, comprised of himself, Durruti, Ascaso, Jover, etc, "the best terrorists of the working class).

Today, it is not possible within the kingdom of Spain to consider anarchist activity as terroristic according to the legal definitions, which on the other hand are always changing, nor the court rulings issued to date under democracy. The anarchist "organization" is not such in the eyes of the state because to them, to organize implies hierarchy (and it is probably right, although that is the subject of another debate). We must remind the imbeciles of the CNT that "anarchist" means "movement against leadership" and that it comes from "anarchism" which means "without leader". In addition, a violent act need not necessarily imply terrorism, but that

is not the topic of this debate. It does not matter if anarchism fits or not within this legal or linguistic definition. What is important is that it is a constructed category and it is absurd to accept or reject it. We must operate based on our own categories, not on those of the system. When we say “the state is the terrorist”, we are accepting it, only to apply it to the state. Terrorism has become the new magic demonic word that no one wants for themselves and that everyone applies to others. In fact, the most recent criminal code does not even refer to violence. A terrorist act is anything that “repeatedly seeks to subvert the constitutional order and/or seriously disturb the public order”. Lately, even the people’s intention is prosecuted (as for example in the case of the young people of Altsasu imprisoned for a fight with some federal police in the town Navarra who now face 50 years of imprisonment per cop). This highlights the contradictions that exist on the matter within the judicial system itself (the not-at-all-revolutionary former judge Baltasar Garzon, now a jurist, protested against this measure applied to the Navarra youth who had already been mentioned in the pages of a newspaper, which can hardly be suspected of being subversive, El Pais).

This legal category has been created by expanding the definition of terrorism percisely to serve as an instrument to stop the fight against the system, although this has not yet been reflected in sentences and is likely to be modified. Because of the historical repulsion that the word tends to carry with it, “terrorism” has become the wild-card crime to more effectively stoke subversion. How does it make sense to accept it or not, especially when by saying “the state is the terrorist” we take up their definition (which is also represented in the collective imaginary in a very particular way) but in order to apply it to another.

Perhaps we mean to say that we are not indiscriminate mass murderers? Because that is the ideal that usually accompanies the term. And to whom do we want to say this? To everyday people?

Everyday people already know. That kind of propaganda, that kind of expression of solidarity, brings us to an impasse that is, surely, the result of fear: the desire to clear the name of anarchism and of the detained or incarcerated in the public eye. We still want to seem nice to an abstract something to whom we direct the campaigns.

The campaigns are also the base of our operations. Many times, our continuous undertakings are substituted for increased propaganda and mobilizations/actions. This occurs during a period of time with a well defined beginning and end (usually arrests and final sentencing, though the campaign often ends well before) when we carry out a serious of, primarily propagandistic but not solely, actions. These moments are widely marked by this near obsession with coming off as respectable people, or people who do not deserve what is happening to them and who are not what the state says they are. We continue to speak in the moral, linguistic, and even legal terms of the state.

It is rarely explained why, in the anti-terrorist operations, for example, the state detains and incarcerates us. It is not usually explained that there has been an escalation in (both general social as well as anarchic) conflict and that the apparatus of the state has to stop it at any costs. The number of attacks against power and its institutions, what was the context, or what they were motivated by, is not explained. The anarchist role in the political expressions of these social tensions is not explained. Paradoxically, the state itself does explain all of this although while, logically, instrumentalist and distorting it (and sometimes blatantly lying) for its own benefit. The anarchist scene generally tends to explain actions with a vague argument of “we are the dissent”, which says nothing. It is common to take of “not frightening people” and of the aforementioned “seeking alliances”, but in practice, these “people” and “alliances” rarely respond. This keeps everything within the very narrow world of antagonism and not even, because sometimes even within the

anarchist milieu there are people who do not want to support certain issues for reasons of “image” (as for example in the delicate issues of robbery).

It draws our attention, for example, that in operation Pinata (one of the numerous anti-terrorist mechanisms deployed against anarchism in the kingdom of Spain) there has been special emphasis on the fact that neither anarchists in general nor the accused are terrorists (the same special emphasis has also been put in the other operations). However, it has hardly been touched upon, except in a few communiques, that the police established an anarchist hierarchical structure with its bosses, middle managers, etc. There were many posters saying “the state is the terrorist”, but we have still not seen one that says “anarchists have no leaders”. Why? Is it more horrible that they charge us, unsuccessfully, with being fanatical mass murders (the collective imaginary of terrorism), instead of the state itself and its structures? And why, if those people to whom we theoretically direct our words, know perfectly well that anarchists do not indiscriminately kill people (the last time that a murder was associated with anarchism in the Spanish kingdom was exactly 21 years ago and the time before another 19 or 20 and the time before was in the 60s, and the time before during the era of the maquis).

However, and paradoxically, not everyone knows that we do not have nor do we want leaders. Clearly, the desire to clear the name so that it sits well with this invention of the press called “the public opinion”, is far greater than the desire to extend the struggle that has led anarchists to prison.

Everything expressed here are doubts and concerns, referring broadly to general events. This does not mean that there are not comrades who have tried to break with these very Iberian dynamics, nor that they are so widespread in the rest of the anarchist movements across these artificial borders. Either way, it is in our hands to keep extending this solidarity of struggle. Question those

things with which we do not agree, not with mere words or critiques made from a superior morality, but with acts. To say that we do not accept this thing and that in its place we can present that other.

It is in our hands to confront the issue of solidarity and to articulate a strong and combative anarchist movement. Always with our heads held high.



***Society already
provides us with
social workers and
priests.***

***Revolutionaries must deal
with other things.***